

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 and 13-15 are currently pending. By this amendment, Applicants have amended claims 1, 5 and 14, canceled claim 12 and added new claim 15. No new matter has been added.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 5, 7-12 and 14.

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 12 which the Examiner indicated as being allowable. Claim 12 has been canceled. Support for this amendment is found throughout the Specification and Drawings, as filed, for example in Figures 1-7.

Claim 5 has been amended to be in independent form. Support for this amendment is found throughout the Specification and Drawings, as filed, for example in claims 1 and 5, as filed.

Claim 15 has been added and recites the subject matter of claim 14 in independent form, including the subject matter of former claims 1 and 3. Support for this amendment is found throughout the Specification and Drawings, as filed.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above-identified application, in light of the above amendments and following remarks.

Objections to the Claims

1. Claims 5, 7-11, 12 and 14 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claim 5 has been amended to be in independent form. Claim 12 has been canceled, its subject matter

incorporated into independent claim 1. Claim 15 is newly presented and includes the subject matter of claim 14, in independent form, including the subject matter of former claims 1 and 3.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

2. Claims 1-3 and 13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) (or in the alternative under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)), as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,958,614 to Takei, et al. ("Takei"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As set forth above, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 12, which the Examiner indicated as containing allowable subject matter. As such, claim 1 and all claims depending therefrom now define patentable subject matter over the prior art of record, including Takei. For at least this reason, withdrawal of the rejection applied to claims 1-3 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) (or under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)), as being anticipated by (or unpatentable over) Takei, is respectfully requested.

3. Claim 4 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takei in view of U.S. Patent No. 6124052 to Katoh et al. ("Katoh"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 4 depends from claim 1 and, for the reasons set forth above in connection with the rejection over Takei, defines patentable subject matter over the prior art of record, including Takei and Katoh, considered alone or in combination. For at least this reason, withdrawal of the rejection applied to claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable over Takei in view of Katoh, is respectfully requested.

4. Claim 6 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takei in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,850,554 to Zimmern (“Zimmern”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 6 depends from claim 1 and, for the reasons set forth above in connection with the rejection over Takei, defines patentable subject matter over the prior art of record, including Takei and Zimmern, considered alone or in combination. For at least this reason, withdrawal of the rejection applied to claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable over Takei in view of Zimmern, is respectfully requested.

5. Claims 1, 2 and 13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,517,259 to Lance (“Lance”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As set forth above, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 12, which the Examiner indicated as containing allowable subject matter. As such, claim 1 and all claims depending therefrom now define patentable subject matter over the prior art of record, including Lance. For at least this reason, withdrawal of the rejection applied to claims 1, 2 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Lance, is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

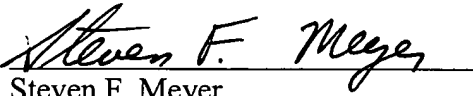
For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims, as currently presented, including newly presented claim 15, define patentable subject matter over the cited art considered alone or in combination, and that this application is in condition for allowance.

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